

ARTICLE APPEARED  
ON PAGE 25NEW YORK TIMES  
31 March, 1985

## Bad Time for A Secrets Ban

In Washington's lexicon, trial balloons are vessels that carry "leaks" about possible policies. High officials commonly float them to test political sentiment, though sometimes they send them up to arouse it. William J. Casey, the Director of Central Intelligence, floated one of his own within the Administration earlier this month, a proposal to make it a crime for Government employees deliberately to disclose "any classified information" without authorization. Last week, said an Administration official who asked not to be identified, it was shot down, with Mr. Casey's acquiescence.

The Reagan Administration has been worrying for some time about disclosures of national secrets. But its initiatives for containing them, from lifelong censorship of certain officials' writing to increased use of

lie-detector tests, have met with strong opposition on Capitol Hill. Talk of a broad new official secrets act was already stiffening Congressional spines. That, Administration officials said, was one factor in the decision not to pursue the proposal. Another, they said, was a sense that that the timing was off. The Justice Department is arguing in a pending case that disclosure is already a crime on the nation's books, a view upheld in a pretrial ruling by a Federal District Judge.